Increasing Koori Engagement in the Emergency Services Victoria, Australia

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Acknowledgment of Country: We would like to show our respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, of elders past and present, of which the events in relation to this study took place.

Throughout this document, the term "Koori" is used to refer to Victorian Aboriginal people. Use of the term "Aboriginal" is retained in the names of programs, titles, and initiatives, and unless otherwise noted, is inclusive of Victorian Aboriginal People.

Abstract

Aboriginal people of Victoria, also known as Koori people, are under-engaged in emergency services agencies in Victoria through communication, public outreach, volunteerism, and employment. The purpose of this project is to understand the disconnect between Koori communities and emergency services agencies in Victoria by utilising methods such as interviews and meetings with representatives from the Koori community and these agencies. The project will result in recommendations on ways to influence increased engagement of Koori community members in emergency services agencies.

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Executive Summary

In order to gain an outside perspective on Koori engagement within the emergency services, our group worked with the Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) as an outside party to assess what the agencies have done with Koori inclusion thus far, and see what recommendations could be made to move forward and engage the Koori community more successfully. Throughout this project our group formed relationships and made connections with agencies and the Koori community. By attending cultural awareness sessions and immersing ourselves in the Koori community we were able to establish a personal relationship with the elders, and community members. This was something that was an integral part of the project and attributes to the success of the interviews that we were able to conduct with the members of the Koori community. We learned that in order to effectively engage the Koori community, face-to-face contact is a necessity. The Koori community is one of deep rooted traditions and cultural values, and understanding these traditions and values can earn trust and respect. Working with emergency services agencies such as Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB), Country Fire Authority (CFA), and State Emergency Service (SES), we were able to see what Koori engagement tactics were already used, or currently in use. Through the relationships built with the agencies, we offered recommendations based on our experience that we believed would ultimately aid in a more successful engagement of the Koori community.

Fire prevention and emergency services are an integral part of Victoria, Australia's safety. MFB, CFA, and SES are facing a lack of engagement with the Koori community. Efforts across all agencies have been taken in order to engage with the Koori community through interaction, public outreach, and employment, both volunteer and career based.

In the background we look to establish the topics that help support why our project has been created. We also look to reveal the cultural sensitivities surrounding the project, and the stakeholders' objectives. Once objectives of the stakeholders were established, parallel situations were analyzed in order to draw similarities to the mission of Koori engagement.

The ESF, in partnership with CFA, SES, and MFB, are involved in an evaluation of the policies, procedures and practices of CFA, SES, and MFB, in an effort to produce findings that will yield recommendations for how to increase Koori engagement in the emergency services. The goal of our project is to work with the members of the emergency services agencies of Victoria as well as with members of the local Koori community to develop recommendations for CFA, SES, and MFB to increase Koori engagement in their respective agencies. We formulated the following objectives to achieve our goal:

I.   Obtaining CFA, SES, and MFB Perspective on Koori Engagement
II.   Understanding Koori Community's View of Emergency Services

Through personal interviews, and community meetings, we were able to establish both agency and Koori community perspective on Koori engagement. After results were compiled from both the agencies and the Koori community, recommendations could be made.

Our results from our interviews with the agencies were compiled into six different matrices. They different matrices were categorized as follows: cultural awareness, koori public outreach, education/youth, emergency contact and communication, volunteer work, and career work. The six matrices were designed to help better identify what agencies have done previously in terms of Koori engagement. We then compared those results to the results obtained during the Koori interview, and were able to cross reference the date we had to make proper recommendations.

The general discussion contains recommendations for MFB, CFA and SES. These recommendations represent programs and changes that can be applied to the different agencies in order to improve Koori engagement efforts as well as help aid future researchers. Ideas for unification, as well as internal changes are presented to the agencies. The necessary protocol for engagement is discussed as well as how to start forming relationships with the Koori community.

1.0 Introduction

The state of Victoria is one of the most fire-prone regions on Earth due to its extremely dry climate with only approximately 650 millimeters of annual rainfall (Visit Victoria, 2015). Because of the state's sporadic weather patterns, however, Victoria can also be subject to damaging cyclones and floods. Because of this, fire prevention and emergency services are paramount in the state of Victoria. There are three main emergency services agencies that respond to fire and natural disaster related emergencies.

1) The Country Fire Authority (CFA) responds to fire and related emergency services in the state of Victoria. This includes 60% of Melbourne's suburbs, all provincial cities and towns, and all country areas (VFBV, 2014).
2) The Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) also provides fire and related emergency services, but in the metropolitan Melbourne area. MFB also develops and offers programs aimed at preventing fire and other emergencies.
3) The State Emergency Service (SES) is the control agency for natural disasters such as floods, storms, earthquakes, and tsunamis. They distribute warnings and alerts to all threatened areas of Victoria.

One issue that all three agencies are facing is a lack of engagement of Koori people. A current focus in Australian government policy is reconciliation and connection with Aboriginal Australians. The Koori Inclusion Action Plan (KIAP) was established in many of Victoria's government agencies, one of which being CFA. There is recent widespread effort across all three agencies to engage with Koori communities through increased interaction, attendance at public outreach events, as well as volunteerism and employment. The primary goal of this project is to understand why Koori communities are under-engaged, and analyse current agency practices that deal with Koori inclusion.

To accomplish this, we will conduct interviews with Koori community members, as well as representatives from CFA, SES, and MFB to learn more about the origins of the disconnect between the emergency services agencies and the Koori people. Our interactions with emergency services representatives will allow us to understand what each agency is currently doing to implement its Koori Inclusion plan. In our interactions with the Koori community members, we will seek to understand their current views and opinions of these emergency services agencies.

2.0 Background

The Black Saturday Bushfires of 2009 in Victoria claimed the lives of 173 people. This incident marked the need for institutional changes in Victorian emergency services, as many agencies experienced poor communication lines with other agencies and the community, and ended up duplicating efforts that wasted time and resources in treating the disaster. To overcome the barriers experienced during this incident, Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) was founded as an agency to be an all-encompassing umbrella for the emergency services, and currently serves as a platform to unite Victorian emergency services agencies in assessing, diagnosing, and controlling emergencies and natural disasters. Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) harbors the three primary agencies being evaluated in this project, MFB, SES, and CFA.

Part of EMV's mission statement is the practice of "communication interoperability"(EMV, 2014). Encouraged by EMV's vision for more resilient communities, communication interoperability is a plan of increased interaction and communication between fire and emergency services with Victoria's communities, businesses and government. As part of this vision, this project will be evaluating current systems and programs in place in MFB, CFA, and SES to engage with the community, particularly the Koori community, and make recommendations to further improve the relationship between emergency services agencies and the Koori community.

In order to acquire information on and further understand Koori inclusion strategies, our team first researched Koori cultural history and their relationship with government and emergency services agencies. Other research was conducted on the agencies themselves, specifically on their multicultural inclusion strategies, and engagement and recruitment methods. Lastly, our team will analysed inclusion tactics in similar indigenous American inclusion circumstances in the United States and compare them to Koori inclusion plans in Victoria.

While Aboriginal people only make up approximately 3% of Australia's entire population, more than 66% of the Aboriginal community lives in New South Wales and Victoria today. Even though a larger proportion of Aboriginal communities are located in New South Wales and Victoria, studies have shown that very few Aboriginal people are involved in the emergency services, especially in Victoria (ILCTS).

2.1 A History of Koori Marginalization from Emergency Services

In order to portray the social dynamics between the Koori people and the emergency services, we will explore the existence of a history of conflict and feelings of disconnect that exist between the Koori and non-Koori people of Australia. This analysis provides a background in which to begin to examine why there is low engagement of the Koori people in the

emergency services, specifically with the Country Fire Authority (CFA), State Emergency Service (SES), and Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB).

An underlying feeling of separation and racism between the Koori and non-Koori people of Australia has roots dating back to the 1700s and is still present in society today. Australia was "settled without serious consideration of the status or prior ownership rights of its [Koori] people" (Hollinsworth, 2008, p.1). One significant historical event that remains in the forefront of the minds of Koori people today is "Camp Cumeragunja" in the early 1930s (KCAT Session). Initially established as a camp to offer refuge to over 200 Koori people, Camp Cumeragunja soon evolved into a camp used to separate the Koori people from society and oppress their rights. For instance, when applying for assistance, Koori residents in New South Wales (NSW) were told they were "too black" to apply, and they were encouraged to apply to another program (the NSW Aborigines Protection Board), but when they applied to this program, they were told they were "too white" (Maynard, 2003). Given situations like these, the Koori community tends to be hesitant toward any action plans set forth by the government which are intended to "help" the Koori people. As a result, any action plans to engage the Koori in different sectors of the community have been difficult to implement.

One of the sectors most affected by the history of marginalization is the law enforcement agency of the emergency services. This sector has seen Koori and non-Koori community conflicts since the early 1900s. The reason for this conflict was because law enforcement agencies were responsible for enforcing legislation passed by the federal government that restricted the rights of the Koori people (KCAT Session, 2015). In the 1960s relations between the Koori people and law enforcement was at its worse because Koori education camps separated children from their families and it was law enforcement agents who took children from their families and brought them to the education camps.

In a 1991 report by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, concluded that the Koori people were over-represented in Australia's criminal justice system. These findings prompted the Aboriginal Strategic Plan and led to a new effort to identify the reasons why more Koori people were having a higher number of conflicts with law enforcement than non-Koori people. These efforts involved speaking with Koori community members in order to gather data about their health and education which began to shed light on the problem of inequity for their community.

Throughout the last few decades there have been strides taken to improve the relationships between the Australian government and the Koori people. Attempts to improve Victoria police and relations with the Koori community have facilitated an increased openness between Koori and non-Koori people, as well as within other agencies of the emergency services in Australia. Currently, the state of relations between the Koori people and the Victoria Police is evolving toward improved relations (Strong, 2008). Examining tactics that have worked for the Victoria police in improving Koori relations with their agency can possibly help reveal

options for engagement for other emergency service agencies to improve relations with the Koori community as well.

In order to aid other agencies in improving their relations with the Koori community a 2008 investigation was launched to examine whether strategies implemented by the Victoria Police in its Aboriginal Strategic Plan 2003- 2008 achieved their intended aims and which strategies were most effective. The review was conducted by interviewing Victoria Police officers as well as Koori Elders to assess progress. The findings from these interviews showed that one initiative that appeared to be working was Aboriginal Cultural Training courses for all police officers deployed in areas where there is a significant Koori population. By providing cultural training sessions, police officers learned more about the cultural differences between themselves and the Koori people, and they learned methods to analyze situations to help reduce conflicts between the Koori people and the Victoria Police (Strong, 2008). Although relations between the Victoria Police and the Koori people are starting to improve the level of engagement and participation of the Koori people in Victoria Police and other emergency services still remains low (ILCTS). Thus, one aim of the current research is to investigate why this low engagement exists.

Efforts to improve Koori and non-Koori relations have not just been focused to the Victoria Police. The Australian federal government has also made efforts to attempt to mend relations on a larger countrywide scale. This effort was meant to set an example to all government agencies of importance of engaging Koori communities and mending relations. In On December 3, 2007 Kevin Rudd, the leader of the Australian Labor Party, won the deferral election becoming the first new prime minister in twelve years. His campaign was driven by the slogan "closing the gap". He was a firm believer in Koori community rights, and was campaigning for the Aboriginal people of Australia. Upon his first day in office, Rudd personally apologized for the government of Australia and the way that the Koori people were treated. The gap that he spoke of was not only categorized by treatment based on race, but also was categorized by physical aspects of life between Koori and non-Koori people. One of these aspects included life expectancy. The life expectancy of a non-Koori person is 17 years more than that of someone who is part of the Koori community. Kevin Rudd's "Sorry" speech on February 13th 2008 apologized to the "Stolen Generations" of Aboriginal Australians and their families. This apology was directed toward Koori people who were affected by past Australian Parliaments for the laws and policies that have inflicted suffering especially with the removal of Koori children from their families (Rudd, 2008). The Koori Community felt this public statement from the government was a long overdue symbolic step toward mending relations. (KCAT Session). This effort from the federal government to set the tone for the nation still continues today as the current administration releases an annual "closing the gap statement"; a statement directed at what must be does in order to close the gap in standard of living between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

In an effort to help define what steps the federal government would continue to take to improve relations with the Koori community an inclusion action plan needed to be developed. This plan set the tone for the nation and was the origin from which state and local agencies developed their own personal Koori inclusion action plans.

2.2 Koori Inclusion Action Plan

The Koori Inclusion Action Plan (KIAP) is a set of guidelines developed to improve Koori engagement nationwide. The plan calls for improvement in four main areas: Data and Service Improvement, Koori Employment, Economic Participation and Communication, and Engagement and Partnerships" (CFA, 2014). These four areas are targeted to ensure that the Koori community is included in organizational decisions, that the greatest possible information is gathered about their culture to create the most valuable cultural programs, that they are compensated through involvement via employment and other forms, and that the Koori community is educated and engaged with the emergency services, particularly CFA, SES, and MFB.

2.3 Emergency Services Foundation: Role, Mission, and Involvement with the Koori

The Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) is the primary organization that represents all emergency services in Victoria, Australia. The ESF was founded after the events of the Ash Wednesday Bushfires of 1983. There were 75 fatalities in these fires, of which 17 were fire-fighters. The goal of the foundation is to support the families of emergency services workers in the event of their injury or death in the line of duty. The ESF also began holding conferences for emergency services divisions in the area in order to create a forum to discuss common issues between all the agencies. Within Victoria, Australia there are six different emergency services that comprise the ESF. They include the Country Fire Authority (CFA), the State Emergency Services (SES), Ambulance Victoria (AV), the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB), and the Victoria Police (VicPol). All agencies within the ESF have differing responsibilities in which they uphold in order to help keep the people of Victoria safe. Out of the six agencies CFA and SES have a large amount of volunteer workers, and MFB is comprised of mostly career workers. One goal of the organizations is to increase the engagement between the agencies and the Aboriginal community, not only within volunteerism, but with professional jobs as well. Although the ESF represents these five organizations, the first step of this project will mainly be working with CFA, SES, and MFB on Koori engagement.

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) is a volunteer and community based fire and emergency services organization made up of 58,000 volunteers statewide and 1,100 career workers. There are 1,186 CFA brigades throughout both rural and urban areas in Victorian

Australia. The main goal of the CFA is to prevent emergency situations, ranging from large scale forest fires to house fires, and to also rapidly respond to any emergency event that a particular brigade may be called to. CFA also helps raise awareness about emergency-related issues to the Victorian population. The CFA has been moving towards cultural engagement with the Koori community, in a focused effort to increase Koori volunteerism within the CFA.

The State Emergency Service (SES) acts as a form of rapid response to any natural disaster within Victoria. Potentially hazardous weather is immediately reported by SES. SES Victorian Headquarters work with regional officers to prepare and warn communities of any natural disasters. Volunteers are readied to help support any damage that these natural disasters may cause. People are provided with instructions on how to remain safe, and in case of any flooding or strong winds, it is SES's responsibility to open shelters to the public to offer safety. Much like CFA, SES is highly dependent on the work of volunteers, and including Koori people within these volunteer workers and communicating more efficiently with the Koori community are the goals of SES.

The Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) is the third agency that will be focused on when discussing engaging the Koori community. MFB works within the metropolitan area of Victoria to prevent emergency situations. Like CFA, MFB focuses on fire and emergency management services in Victoria. However, unlike CFA, MFB has a large role in creating systemic change to the environment in Melbourne in order to make it a safer place. One of its primary goals is to research different techniques of prevention that will help improve the safety of the people of Victoria.

2.4 Analyzing Parallel Situations

Just like Aboriginal Australians, Native Americans in the Unites States have also struggled with integration in the work place. The United States Department of Labor's Division of Indian and Native American Program (DINAP) helps integrate Native Americans in the workplace, (much like integrating Koori community members in the workplace). The DINAP is strictly dedicated to helping Native Americans not only obtain jobs, but also the skills required to succeed in multiple fields. The DINAP has succeeded in integrating Native Americans in the workplace through "workers units" and special "national program units". From 2009-2011 Native American workers rates increased by 6.7% due to programs like workers units and national programs units (DINAP, 2012). Both worker units and national program units are used as means to target specific Native American workers and manage grants and investments made to these workers to help them succeed in the work place. They also act as means to make sure that Native Americans are getting the rights that they deserve within the workplace. This is something that has improved social standings of the Native Americans, and studying the tactics used by the DINAP can help integrate the Koori people in Victoria, Australia. Elements such as

how the DINAP engaged Native Americans with the work force can be studied to help engage the Koori community in a similar manner.

A large issue studied within the Native American community is the idea of colonialism. Native American tribes are based on a system of hunting and gathering, and a system of cultural morals that instill values to their people. Their culture is also made up of a hierarchy established by the long lasting traditions of their people. The Native Americans did not believe in the change that was being forced on them by the Europeans colonizing, and when it happened they did not want to conform. Over time, Europeans continued to colonize Native Americans against their will, and eventually forcefully took over their land. Today, integrating Native Americans in the United States society is still an objective the US government is trying to accomplish. One way of integrating Native Americans in the work force was exploring their roots. Recognizing a group's cultural identity is very helpful when attempting to integrate (KCAT, 2015). Instead of forcing a new way of life, it could be positive to allow Native Americans to integrate cultural traditions and values in the workplace. Much like Native Americans the Aboriginal Community is not homogenous, and made up of hundreds of other tribes. Different tribes bring different cultural backgrounds. Recognizing these varying backgrounds will allow for inclusion between the Aboriginal community members and the emergency services. By examining how Native Americans were included, strategies for inclusion can be viewed with more sensitivity. Drawing parallels between the United States and Australia with regards to inclusion of underrepresented groups allows us to recognize as to what has worked in the past, and gives organizations like CFA, SES, and MFB potentially new tools to include Koori community members. These tools include cultural awareness and recognition of cultural protocols and practices.

The CFA station within the township of Barmah, which is located in Victoria, Australia can be examined when moving forward with Koori engagement. Much like Melbourne, Barmah was struggling with engaging Koori community members within the emergency services. The ultimate goal was to include Koori people within the emergency services and increase Koori volunteerism within CFA. In the past, the Barmah Brigade has always had one or two active Aboriginal Australian members; however, coming from a community where 30% of the population is of Koori decent, this is not a very large number. When examining why this happened, it was found that much of the youth tends to leave Barmah when they finish getting their education. Second Lieutenant of the Barmah Brigade, explained that there was a need to break down the barriers that occur between the Koori community and non-Koori community which would help reach the youth and begin engagement between the brigade and the community.

After the case study was finished, members of the Barmah Brigade identified three objectives found in the Barmah case study that they believed would improve Koori inclusion. The objectives were: 1. Contact and engage the local Aboriginal Organization in the area, 2.

Have non-Koori agency members attend cultural awareness training to get a greater understanding about Koori culture and history, and 3. Have CFA talk more about "Caring for Country", and how CFA cares for the land and manages fires (Barmah Case Study, 2013). Caring for Country is a phrase used by agencies and the Koori community to describe the practice of managing the land with a sense of respect. For thousands of years, the Koori people used this practice to keep the land fertile and healthy. These objectives identified in the case study were used by CFA within Barmah, however, they are objectives that can be used in all emergency services when attempting to engage the Koori community.

The Case Study explained that for the Barmah Brigade contacting the local Aboriginal Organization is the first step. This created a fluid communication between the agencies and the Koori people, and helps identify the underlying problems. The 2nd Lieutenant of the Barmah Brigade expressed how much the cultural awareness really helped the Brigade when he stated "the Koori Cultural Awareness Training was very informative and [I] learned a lot. For the members that attended the training, it taught them how to engage the aboriginals that live in Barmah. It has made it easier, more meaningful and built stronger connections" (Barmah Case Study, 2013). Finally, by expressing how CFA, SES, and MFB cares for Australia as a whole, it unites the people of Australia, both Koori and non-Koori alike. This is done through many different tactics. To demonstrate to the youth how important volunteerism is, the Barmah Brigade took a fire tanker to the local Aboriginal Cultural Center. They let the people of Barmah explore the tanker. This hands on exploration helped engaged the Koori communities interest in CFA. The Brigade also staged a cookout, which, according to the Barmah Case Study was a fun and helpful way to close gaps between the Koori and non-Koori, and at the same time taught them more about CFA (Barmah Case Study, 2013). The Brigade has not only grown in membership, but also in awareness. More Koori junior members and a new senior member have successfully achieved ranks in the Brigade, and the Brigade continues to look for ways to further increase these numbers in the future.

By examining the Barmah Fire Brigade case study, and discovering what they were successfully able to accomplish, much can be learned when looking to include Koori community members in CFA, SES, and MFB in Victoria. The case study offers several tips to other brigades. It stresses how important it is to engage with the Koori community in the area, whether it be sports clubs, schools, community centers, or the Local Indigenous Network (LIN). The Barmah Brigade also advocates being a part of an event such as NAIDOC week, which helps recognize Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander achievements, and helping familiarize the Koori community with the tools and vehicles the brigade uses to help stimulate interest. Offering a juniors program is a great way to engage the young people of the Koori community. Finally, the Barmah Brigade shows how they "Care for Country", and that CFA protects the lives and property of the people they serve. By following these tips, it is believed that the Koori inclusion in an area will dramatically increase (Barmah Case Study, 2015).

MFB, CFA, and SES all desire to improve their public outreach, educational programs, and recruitment of volunteers and career workers to the Koori community. Our approach to developing research and recommendations for the Emergency Services Foundation to improve these areas will be heavily supported by Koori cultural history, social protocols, information about current inclusion programs, and similar inclusion tactics in other areas.

3.0 Methodology

The Emergency Services Foundation (ESF), in partnership with Country Fire Authority (CFA), State Emergency Service (SES), and Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB), are involved in an evaluation of the policies, procedures and practices of CFA, SES, and MFB, in an effort to produce findings that will yield recommendations for how to increase Koori engagement in the emergency services. The goal of our project is to work with the members of the emergency services agencies of Victoria as well as with members of the local Koori community to develop recommendations for CFA, SES, and MFB to increase Koori engagement in their respective agencies. We formulated the following objectives to achieve our goal:

I.   Obtaining CFA, SES, and MFB Perspective on Koori Engagement
II.   Understanding Koori Community's View of Emergency Services

3.1. Obtain CFA, SES, and MFB perspective on Koori engagement

We interviewed 24 employees of CFA, SES, and MFB ranging from administrative positions to firefighters and volunteers, and an additional 14 from other agencies like Red Cross, Victoria Police, Lifesaving Victoria, and Department of Justice, and Emergency Management Victoria. By conducting these interviews, we sought to understand the directions CFA, SES, and MFB wanted to move toward in terms of Koori Inclusion, as they each wanted to engage Koories differently.

The interviews with the administrative members of these agencies were conducted in a one on one setting. Questions were posed to establish how much multicultural emphasis and diversity are fundamentally in place at this point in the Koori inclusion process, as well as what future plans in this area exist. Examples of questions that were asked are: "What multicultural programs or benefits does your agency offer?", and "What kinds of backgrounds do your employees typically come from?" These interviews also provided additional contacts in each agency at many levels in which further interviews were established.

Paid employees and volunteer workers were interviewed as well. In particular, these interviews aimed to understand six key areas: cultural awareness, outreach to the Koori Community, outreach to youth education, emergency procedures in Koori areas, volunteerism within the agency, and professional career opportunities within the organization (see Appendix B). More specifically:

- **Cultural Awareness** questions were developed to establish the view agency workers have of the Koori community. These questions were focused on identifying what agency staff knew about the Koori community to see if education on Koori cultural and protocols would be beneficial. These research questions also illuminate where institutional changes can be added to increase cultural awareness within each agency.
    - Would you feel comfortable interacting with Koori community members?
    - Have you ever attended any cultural awareness sessions or events in which you were able to learn more about the Koori community?

We measured the overall level of cultural awareness in each organization.

- **Koori Public Outreach** questions were developed to establish to gain an idea of what level of effort agencies as a whole and as individuals have done to engage with the Koori Community. Gaining knowledge on what each agency member has done in terms of previous Koori interaction and their views on future engagement helps to get a better understanding of what agency staff are willing to do to improve engagement.
    - Have you ever worked with Koori people in the past?
    - What is your personal experience with the Koori people?

      We measured the overall level of Koori Public Outreach for each agency.

- **Education/Youth** questions were developed to understand what agencies were doing to engage Koori youth and to identify what tactics have been successful and what have not worked for the past decade.
    - How does your agency engage with the youth programs and schools in Victoria?

      We measured how each agency interacted with and engaged the youth. We also assessed the apparent effectiveness of these outreach efforts.

- **Emergency Contact** questions were developed to identify the ways each agency interacts and communicate with the Koori community in time of emergency and on a regular basis. These questions were focused on revealing if any cultural awareness or knowledge of Koori protocols affected the way an agency interacted with the community.
    - How does your agency distribute warnings and alerts to the public?

      We measured the procedures used and were able to compare this to Koori perceptions of the procedures used by each agency.

- **Volunteer work within agency** questions were developed to establish what the requirements and opportunities were to volunteer for each agency. These questions were focused understanding what motivation agency workers had for their involvement. Our team was also interested in understanding what current staff

members viewed as the barriers to entry and what if anything aided them in completing the volunteer application processes.

- ○ What type of volunteer work is there in your agency?
- ○ What prerequisites are required to volunteer?

We measured whether volunteer opportunities existed within the organization and the requirements necessary to get involved in the organization on a volunteer basis.

- **Career work within agency** questions were developed to establish what the requirements and opportunities were from full time employment for each agency. These questions were focused understanding what motivation agency workers had for their involvement. Our team was also interested in understanding what current staff members viewed as the barriers to entry and what if anything aided them in completing the full time employment application processes.
  - ○ Why did you join your agency? What influenced your decision?
  - ○ What are the requirements to become employed?

We measured whether professional career opportunities existed within the organization and the requirements necessary to get involved in the organization on a professional career basis.

3.2 Understanding Koori Community's View of Emergency Services

In addition to assessing CFA, SES, and MFB perspective on Koori engagement, we assessed the perspective of the Koori community related to emergency services. Methods that were employed to record the views and opinions of Koori community members were interviews and meetings, however, certain etiquette is required when interacting with Koori people. Therefore, our team had to understand and follow this etiquette in order to communicate with Koori people.

One way our team worked to develop this etiquette was by finding opportunities to better understand Koori culture. We accomplished this by attending two different cultural awareness sessions: one held by the CFA and one held by the Department of Justice (DOJ). These cultural awareness sessions aimed to teach non-Koori members about Koori culture and traditions. From these sessions, we tailored our interviews and data collection tactics in ways to demonstrate cultural awareness and respect.

At the CFA cultural awareness session, our team conversed with a Koori Elder from the local Wurundjeri People, who are the Koori people native to the lands around greater Melbourne. We also met on separate occasions with two other Koori Elders to get their personal perspective and recommendations for initial interactions. We were also instructed by a Koori community member at the DOJ session about the importance of observing cultural etiquette and ways to do so.

Before conducting interviews or group meetings with members of the Koori community our team made efforts to establish an open and trusting environment with the Koori participants through open discussion and telling them about who we are and where we are from. This gesture is an important step in interacting with Koori people as our group learned per our cultural awareness training sessions at CFA and at DOJ. Interviews were conducted with Koori Elders and on an individual basis with some community members ; other individual community members in which establishing a more formal interview was not possible given the time restriction of the project, took part in informal meetings. The intent of these formal interviews and informal meetings was to understand the participants' knowledge of local emergency services agencies as well as thoughts on what may be preventing an increase in Koori engagement with these agencies. In particular, these interviews aimed to understand three key areas: Awareness of emergency services agencies, Getting involved with emergency service agencies, Ideas on room for improvement within the organization (see Appendix B). More specifically:

- **Awareness of emergency services agencies -** Questions about awareness of emergency service agencies are prompted to develop how the Koori community feels about emergency service agencies in Victoria. These questions would provide insight on how much the Koori community actually knows about the emergency services, and identify areas that need improvement when educating the Koori community about what emergency service agencies do.
    - What services do you know are offered by MFB, CFA, SES?
    - Who would you call in case of an emergency?
    We measured the overall level of awareness about the emergency services in the community.

- **Getting involved with emergency service agencies -** When asking the Koori community questions about getting involved with emergency service agencies we are attempting to find out the general interest of the Koori community joining agencies to work or volunteer. This will also find ways in which the agencies could increase the community's interest and make the Koori community more prone to wanting to be a part of the agencies.
    - Have you ever considered joining the emergency services?
    - Are there any aspects of emergency services that are appealing to you?
    We measured the overall of interest in getting involved with the emergency services in the community.

- **Ideas on room for improvement** - By obtaining the Koori community perspective on finding areas for improvement within the MFB we are able to see what the Koori community would like to change about engagement of their community with the agencies.
    - Would you want to be more involved with the CFA, MFB, SES as it is currently, or would certain things have to change?
    - How would you like to receive information from the emergency services?

    We recorded suggestions for specific agencies and general recommendations for improved communications with the Koori community.

Personal experiences from these interviews provided beneficial results into finding out what the Koori community would like to see the agencies do differently in order to be more engaging. Results of asking these questions will be examined in order to find common threads of answers that will lead our group to finding out how the Koori community feels about joining the emergency service agencies and how the agencies could possibly make working for them more appealing to the community. Also, by conducting interviews with Koori community members that are already members of the agencies, we will find out how they came to join the agencies, and what appealed to them when they were joining.

In addition to formal interviews our team also collected data by attending community run events. We attended a community gathering and cookout called the Billabong BBQ, hosted by Koori community members. The goal of going to this event was to get a better understanding of Koori community dynamics and to meet Koori community members in an informal setting. We also obtained several contacts in the community at this event to interview later.

Another way we gathered the Koori communities view was through community group meetings, which involved anywhere between two to six Koori community members at a time. These more casual meetings involved our team asking open ended questions to the group and letting the group discuss the topic. The goal of this method was to gain a broader sense of how a group views the emergency services. Our team worked to conduct meetings inside Melbourne, but also outside of the greater metropolitan area. Some of these informal meetings took place at agency run conventions such as the Koori Expo run by the Red Cross. The Red Cross Koori Expo was a way for multiple groups connected to the topic of Koori engagement to meet in the same area to converse about how agencies engage with and recruit Koori community members. Over a hundred people from both the Koori community and the Red Cross were in attendance. Our team worked to network and meet with 20 individuals in small group settings. After the networking and meeting portion, all attendees including our team took part in a yarning circle which is an Aboriginal group discussion where the group can speak

in confidence about issues in the community. There was one yarning circle for men and one for women and each circle focused on discussing issues within their community.

4.0 Results and Recommendations

The results from the interviews and meetings conducted with agency staff is annotated in the six comparison matrices below. Each matrix is comprised of a topic of interest listed at the top of the second column and the list of the agencies involved on the left hand side. This provided us with a way to easily compare and contrast points of view on questions and topics that were discussed with emergency services employees across agencies. The six research topics aimed at discovering what each agency had previously done in terms of Koori engagement and what their goals were moving forward. The six main sectors are:

1. Cultural Awareness
2. Koori Public Outreach
3. Education/Youth
4. Emergency Contact and Communication
5. Volunteer work within agency.
6. Career work within agency.

Despite the difference in focus areas for each agency's main interest, each agency was asked all questions within the six main research sectors in order to allow for later comparison of the three agencies.

4.1 Agencies' Perspective

This section discusses the results of CFA, SES, and MFB interviews and meetings. After establishing the viewpoint of the agencies our team then looked at how to compare these results with the findings from the Koori community interviews and meetings. If any topics addressed by both agency employees and Koori participants resulted in different understanding, opinion, or knowledge, this could be a potential area to generate a recommendation. For example, if a particular agency mentioned a Koori inclusion tactic they were currently employing, and the Koori community was generally unaware of it, this would lead to a recommendation that involved greater publicity and marketing of this inclusion tactic.

4.1.1 Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness allows for one to separate from their personal cultural "norms" and become aware of different cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions that are proposed by varying ethnically and culturally diverse groups. The Koori community is one of deep rooted traditions and cultural boundaries that differ from the non-Koori community. Cultural awareness allows for more knowledge of the Koori community among agency employees and

enhances recognition of any cultural differences that may affect relationships between the agencies and the Koori community. Our group found that when communicating with Koories, they were more receptive and willing to talk openly with us when they found that our group had knowledge of their culture.

CFA promotes cultural awareness by offering optional cultural awareness sessions that all CFA members are encouraged to attend. After conducting interviews it was found that cultural awareness is something that varies from one CFA brigade to another. Four members of CFA who are involved with community resilience expressed that cultural awareness requirements could be beneficial to the agencies. They described how cultural demographics vary from brigade to brigade, however cultural awareness is something that should be uniformly encouraged across the agency. These CFA members suggested that having cultural training would better prepare firefighters to interact with and support a culturally diverse community, particularly Koori communities.

SES does not hold cultural awareness sessions. SES does offer the Community And Linguistically Diverse (CALD) program which is designed to provide safety information about natural disasters and emergencies to culturally diverse communities. One SES CALD project created factsheets and audio in 34 different languages with pictures about flood and storm information. This was designed to help volunteers communicate with culturally and linguistically diverse communities. However, this program does not include or cater to the Koori community. While there are tools in place to assist SES volunteers in communicating with multicultural communities, a Koori component of this program is not currently in place.

MFB does not offer cultural awareness training sessions. However, MFB offers field days that are open to the Victorian community every Friday in the fire yard at the station. These field days are designed to show the community what the workers and firefighters at MFB do on a daily basis. At the end of these field days, a smoking ceremony is held. This is a ceremony run by a Koori community member, and is available for anyone to attend, (workers at MFB are encouraged to take part in this ceremony). By participating in this smoking ceremony one can learn more about the Koori culture, including different traditions and cultural norms. Table 1 shows an overview of each agencies varying cultural awareness programs.

Table 1: Agencies Cultural Awareness

Agency	Cultural Awareness
Country Fire Authority	- Optional Koori Cultural Awareness Sessions offered at Head Quarters (HQ, Burwood) as part of KIAP - Session was also offered once at Lake Tyers in Nov. 2014

State Emergency Service	• CALD Program (does not include Koori community)
Metropolitan Fire Brigade	• Smoking ceremonies held in fire yard • Field Days

4.1.2 Koori Public Outreach

Koori Public outreach is the establishment of initial contact with the Koori community. This involves methods that the agencies use in order to establish a personal connection with the Koori community in order to gain a level of trust substantial enough to warrant discussion. This connection fosters an open dialogue with which to exchange information between the Koori community and the respective agency.

The Koori Inclusion Action Plan (KIAP) was established as a means to begin putting a stronger effort forward with regards to Koori inclusion. The Dreamtime Expo is an event that invites different organizations to a venue in order to represent themselves and engage within the Koori community. CFA attends this Expo annually in order to advocate themselves to the Koori community. According to those interviewed at CFA, The Barmah Brigade was considered as a success. This success was attributed to the brigade employing a full time Koori adult, and adding three Koori youth to the Junior program. The Barmah Brigade also was able to educate the Koori community in Barmah about what CFA is and what the organization does. The Barmah Brigade was something that could be seen as a model for Koori inclusion by all brigades. According to members of CFA one of the hard parts about examining how brigades engage the Koori community is the fact that the brigades are very individualized and spread out. It has been expressed by CFA members that they believe more communication between the brigades, local stations, and state headquarters would prove beneficial when attempting to engage the Koori community. Also, it has been found that CFA members express the need to publicise Koori Inclusion case studies so that all brigades can benefit from it.

SES has begun contacting the Koori community more frequently. SES Community Resilience Coordinator visits the Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place regularly which has been a successful means of establishing a friendly contact with the Koori community. A SES representative explained that he was able to become close with the members of the community before he even talked to them about SES. After establishing this connection, he was then able to explain what SES does to those that were interested, and get the word out about the agency. The representative was then able to set up an SES booth at Koori events and was more accepted when he attended these events, and this, in turn allowed for more interest from the Koori community.

The ultimate goal of the Multicultural Liaison at MFB is to increase the knowledge for multicultural diverse communities of the services MFB offers, the ways in which to contact

them, and the opportunities and entrance requirements one would need to join MFB. Simultaneously there is the goal to increase the awareness of MFB staff toward the needed and cultural protocols for the communities they serve. This ranges across all culturally diverse communities, and is not specific to the Koori community. Table 2 displays how each agency is involved with public outreach within the Koori community.

Table 2: Agencies Koori Public Outreach

Agency	Koori Public Outreach
Country Fire Authority	- Actual outreach on ground is at brigade level, and depends on brigade - Dreamtime Expo - Koori art is displayed at HQ and firehouses
State Emergency Service	- A representative visits local Koori community centres and expos - Have contracted individual from DOJ acting as liaison to Koori community
Metropolitan Fire Brigade	- Multicultural Liaisons - MFB goes to local schools with Koori population - Koori art on firetruck - Appears at career expos

4.1.3 Education/Youth

Education of the Koori community and their youth incorporates programs and educational sessions that respective agencies hold to promote the awareness and knowledge of their services within the local Koori community.

CFA advocates their agency to the youth of Victoria. They offer a Juniors fire program available to all the youth living in Victoria, ranging from ages 11-15. They also visit local schools to gain the interest of the younger generations. When interviewing CFA members, however, the issue of brigade based assignments arose. This means that only individual brigades know what they are doing to promote education and youth outreach, and there is often no reporting back at the state level, (unless it is done on an informal basis). Those being interviewed discussed the fact that the brigades rarely communicate with each other about education and reaching out to the youth, so often times it is hard to assess what brigades are doing to promote education and youth engagement.

Similar to CFA's Junior Program, SES has a Youth Volunteer Program offered to teenagers ranging from 15-18 years old. The program is a way to help teens see what SES does on a daily basis, and possibly have them begin a future career with SES. Having a Community Resilience Coordinator at SES also allows for promotion of the agency to the youth directly. The current Junior Program is offered to every youth citizen in Victoria, however, advertising this more to the Koori youth than it has been in the past could give the Koori community more knowledge about CFA, as well as give the agency more members from the Koori community.

MFB does not have a junior program within the agency. Although MFB does not have a juniors program, the agency still speaks to local schools about fire safety and the possibility of becoming a career fire fighter. MFB also hold field days open to the public to help people learn more about what it's like to be a firefighter, as well as how to handle fire safely. Table 3 is comprised of various ways in which the agencies educate the community, and the youth about what they do.

Table 3: Agencies Work with Education/Youth

Agency	Education/Youth
Country Fire Authority	● Junior Volunteer Firefighting Program (11-15yrs) ● Each brigade governs their own decisions regarding appearances in schools and local events
State Emergency Service	● Youth Associate Volunteer Program (15-18yrs) ● Each unit governs their own decisions regarding appearances in schools and local events
Metropolitan Fire Brigade	● No junior program ● Speaks to local schools about fire safety ● Hold field days at the firehouse open to the public

4.1.4 Emergency Contact and Communication

Emergency communication involves the methods each agency employs to send warnings, alerts, and updates about upcoming and ongoing emergency situations across the state. Most emergency calls regarding fires and state emergencies are sent to the State Control Centre (SCC), and from there are sent out to brigades and stations in the area where the disaster is happening.

CFA and MFB both use social media such as twitter and facebook to connect with the Victorian community. They also use videos that are previewed on youtube in order to help educate the Victorian community more about what they do.

Out of the three agencies we worked with, SES puts the greatest focus on wanting to improve lines of communication with multicultural groups in emergency situations. SES communications representatives said that they wanted to find ways to more effectively distribute warnings and alerts to at-risk Koori communities. One idea that was mentioned was to designate a liaison within the community that can receive the alerts and distribute it to the community himself/herself, as Koori culture is heavily based on face-to-face and word-of-mouth communication. Table 4 shows how each agency communicates with the Victorian community.

Table 4: Agencies Emergency Communication

Agency	Emergency Communication
Country Fire Authority	● Utilisation of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube)
State Emergency Service	● Media and community information officer ● Utilisation of social media ● Radio is larger focus; try to utilise all media
Metropolitan Fire Brigade	● Utilisation of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube)

4.1.5 Volunteer

Volunteer employment with each respective agency includes the entrance requirements, positions offered, recruitment strategies, and the awareness of the possible employment opportunities within the local Koori community.

Due to the fact that the Volunteer rate within the CFA and SES is so large, it is seen as a way by both CFA and SES to increase Koori engagement. By advertising to the Koori community that any Australian citizen can be a volunteer worker, the agencies hope to increase the interest of the Koori community and ultimately have more members of the community apply for positions at the respective agencies. Out of the three agencies our group is working with, only the CFA and SES offer a volunteer program.

CFA has a massive network of volunteers across the state, with generally very independent brigades. There are successful cases of Koori inclusion into CFA brigades (Barmah) and the all-Indigenous Lake Tyers Brigade.

SES offers operational volunteer roles in support and rescue on the ground and also non-operational support roles in areas like fundraising and media. Table 5 displays the volunteer opportunities offered by each agency.

Table 5: Agencies and Volunteerism

Agency	Volunteer
Country Fire Authority	● Mostly a volunteer based agency ● Over 58,000 volunteer firefighters statewide ● Can become full volunteer at the age of 16
State Emergency Service	● Approximately 5,000 volunteers ● Can be operational volunteer, non-operational volunteer, and associate member ● Can become full volunteer at the age of 18
Metropolitan Fire Brigade	● Does not utilize volunteers

4.1.6 Career

Career employment with each respective agency includes the entrance requirements, positions offered, recruitment strategies.

Although CFA is comprised of mainly volunteer workers, it contains full time employees as well. Currently there are over 400 career firefighters employed by CFA, and over 700 administrative and support staff. The requirements to become an employee at CFA are Australian citizenship, physical testing, aptitude testing, and disclosure of criminal record.

SES has a range of currently 82 staff positions based on a level system. The system is designed to rank employees on a scale of 1 to 6, with ranging requirements based on skill level and position. The lowest level available as an employee is 1, and the highest is 6. In order to become a member of the SES you must be 18 years or older and an Australian citizen.

MFB is comprised of approximately 2,200 full time employees. The requirements to become a member of MFB are Australian citizenship, being 18 years of age or older, having an active driver license, and having no criminal record. Upon interviewing members of MFB it was found that they believed the standards for application could be changed in order to make a career more feasible to the Victorian community, especially the Koori community. Having anything on one's criminal record makes it impossible to achieve employment at MFB, and some saw this as too severe to the Victorian community.

Career paths within CFA, SES, and MFB are seen as opportunities to engage the Koori community. By educating the Koori community about the different agencies, the benefits of becoming a full time employee with these agencies can be advocated. Making the possibility of becoming a full time member more realistic to members of the Koori community will potentially allow for the inclusion of more Koori community members within the agencies. Table 6 shows the career opportunities offered by each agency.

Table 6: Agencies and Career Involvement

Agency	Career
Country Fire Authority	● Requirements → Australian citizen, license, need to disclose criminal record, physical test, aptitude test ● 400 career firefighters, 700 administrative and support staff
State Emergency Service	● Wide range of career options based on level system (1 - 6, based on level of work undertaken) ● 82 paid staff members
Metropolitan Fire Brigade	● 1,600 career firefighters ● Requirements → over 18 years of age, Australian citizen, active driver license, no criminal record.

4.2 Koori Community Participants Perspective

This section is an assessment of current and suggested future Koori engagement efforts from the point of view of Koori community members. Results from interviews and meetings with Koori Community Participants are broken up into three main research topics as een in figure 1, they are:
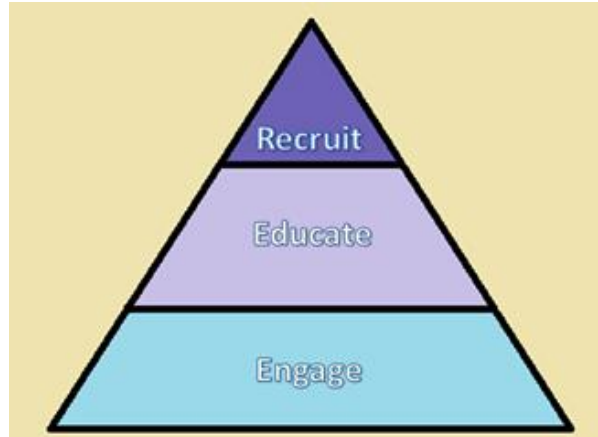
Figure 1 Steps of Inclusion

1. Engage -Koori community ideas for increasing engagement
2. Educate - Koori awareness of emergency services agencies
3. Recruit - Getting involved with emergency services agencies

Engage is the first step that involves establishing an initial connection with a local community or individual. Once a relationship begins to form and trust starts to grow, the second step of educating community members on the roles of the respective agency and the services and opportunities they offer can take place. After the community has been engaged and educated the final step of opening the door toward recruitment and involvement in the agencies in some aspect can occur. These topic areas of focus determined the knowledge of the Koori community participants in terms of the emergency services and the areas of improvement for the agencies that the Koori Community Participants felt would be most beneficial toward improving Koori community and emergency services interaction.

4.2.1 Engage - Koori community ideas for increasing engagement

From all the Koori community members we interacted with, they generally believed that to get involved with an emergency services agency, an informal relationship would first have to be established. The existence of an initial connection established on the grounds of friendly introductions and perhaps the exchange of personal information in their opinion created the best response in terms of openness toward getting involved with the agency later on. Through our cultural awareness training at DOJ, we learned that when speaking with Koori people about business, one should not try to plan a specific time for a meeting to start and finish, as it is customary to speak informally for any length of time before getting to business in order to establish trust and get to know each other. Once agency representatives' faces are recognized in the community and have gotten to know community members informally, they can begin to speak about business.

Once agencies have been invited to the community, efforts such as making appearances in community centers and local youth groups helps to start the conversations about emergency services with younger Koori community members, but the next stage of continuing this engagement as youth become young adults is perceived to be nonexistent. An initial connection could be made by the agency by establishing a personal connection with local gathering centers and by attending career expos. For example, the Community Resilience Coordinator at SES made contact with the Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Center (MMIGC) and was able to first establish an informal relationship, without even having to talk about SES.

From meetings with agency staff members and Elders in the Koori community it was found that both the Koori community and the emergency services have a strong connection to fire and land management. The underlying theme of "Caring for Country" was consistently brought up when interviewing Koori community members. One Wurundjeri Elder (the Wurundjeri are a Koori people native to the greater Melbourne area) explained that mutual respect for Australian land can be used as a way to come together and engage the Koori community. This Elder also explained how their ancestors used controlled fires to promote healthy land growth as well as prevent bush fires from breaking out. He expressed that Koori culture offers important knowledge in the topic of controlled burns, as well as other land management techniques, and mentioned that knowledge gained over 60,000 years of living in Australia could be beneficial to emergency services agencies, and agencies adopting this concept when practicing land management would appeal to many Koories.

Not only did the Koori community members want to visit brigades and units more often, they also want the agencies to visit community centres and career expos more often. Having agency liaisons and representatives visit community activities and workshops would help to establish a relationship between the community and the agencies. For example, representatives from SES have recently been attending events hosted by local community centres, and the community members at these centres generally had very positive feedback about their presence at these events. The Koori community members in the suburban area also mentioned events like food banks that ran off of the assistance of volunteers, and when we posed the idea of agency members volunteering at these events on behalf of their agency, the Koori community members we spoke with mentioned that it would be a great idea and they would love to see it happen, particularly with the local unit/brigade that was about one kilometer away from the community centre.

All five of the Koori Elders that we spoke to emphasized the need for trust. They all referenced the uneasy history that Aboriginal Australians have had, and in order to trust an outsider coming to their community and giving them information, they must know who the person is. Once this connection has been established between the community and agency

representatives, both parties will find it easier to discuss ways with which they can work together.

4.2.2. Educate - Awareness of emergency services agencies

Results for Koori participants' knowledge about CFA, SES and MFB found that there was a sense of uncertainty among the community about what each agency's responsibilities are. Some uncertainty was based on what services each agency offers and how contacting one emergency contact number 000 can direct a person to the right service. Questions that came from the community included: "How does calling 000 get you to what you need every time" and "Is there a cost for calling the SES". These questions characterized some of the uncertainty that surrounds engaging with the emergency services. After first establishing the initial informal connection just focusing on getting the basic message across that the agencies are a free service meant to help the community can help establish a friendly tone with which the agency can be viewed in the community.

A general theme mentioned by Koori community members from all interviews describes the importance of public safety education. An agency presence within the school system running interactive talks was said by Koori members to be a positive way to generate emergency resilience with the Koori community, and allow members of the community to understand the ways in which the agencies run as well as how to possibly pursue a future career in the agencies. Participants believed that a more prominent "juniors" program in each agency would also be a good way to engage the youth of the Koori community and advocate agency goals.

Koori community members also expressed the desire to have more physical interaction with the agencies in local neighborhoods. Having community members visit local SES units, CFA brigades, and MFB firehouses on trips through cultural gathering centres would generate interest in the community. Often times, Koori community members explained that the people of their community simply don't know what each agency does, and having opportunities to explore brigades and units would enable opportunities for community education about the agencies.

While there are some efforts yet to be undertaken by emergency services agencies to meet specific Koori requests, the efforts they are in fact undertaking are not necessarily all being advertised and marketed effectively to Koori communities. From our group meetings and interviews with Koori community members we gathered that the receptiveness toward interacting with the agencies increased when participants knew there was a genuine effort to acknowledge and incorporate their culture being made by the respective organisation.

CFA, SES, and MFB are all currently making an effort toward improving their relationship with Koori communities and their internal cultural awareness. In this respect the Koori community does not see the level of effort that each agency is putting forth to helping foster

relations. A large part of the overall engagement effort is the perspective in which the Koori community views the agencies.

Efforts already undertaken by CFA and MFB to incorporate the traditional land management practices associated with Koori traditions. For example, CFA has begun mapping Koori cultural sites so that their vehicles will not disturb these sites. From our meetings with the Koori community, efforts such as the mapping of cultural sites are not publicized and going unnoticed by the larger Koori community. The increase in frequency of smoking ceremonies and "Welcome to Country" ceremonies as well as the increased presence of Koori influence in the CFA and MFB is also not publicized to the greater Koori community.

Another effort undertaken by an agency that is not publicized to members of the Koori community is the cultural awareness sessions the CFA is currently running for its staff centered on Koori history and interaction with the Koori community. Educating the Koori community about agency inclusion practices would allow the Koori community to see that progress that is being made and help show the effort the agencies are putting forth toward improving internal staff cultural awareness.

Marketing could take the form of more large scale efforts such a TV campaigns directed at a Koori audience focused on the efforts an agency is doing to incorporate a local Koori community group. Utilizing Social media directed a Koori community groups or pages can also be a low cost tactic toward highlighting particular engagement efforts to a wide audience. More short term and localized marketing can also be done. Marketing on a brigade or unit level specifically to a local Koori community can help convey the efforts and events that are taking place on a daily basis.

One way to visually show the progress to the Koori community would be to have each staff participant of the cultural awareness session receive a pin of the Koori flag. This would not only be a small incentive and take away for each participant but could also be worn on the uniform when the staff member goes out into the community. This pin would remind the staff member of the overarching objectives of their agency when interacting with the community. The pin would also signify to the Koori community members and the greater Victoria community that this agency staff member has completed a cultural awareness session. This increased visual representation would show the Koori community the growing effort that the agency is putting forth toward cultural integration and acceptance. This effort could span across agencies has more agencies establish their cultural awareness programs for their staff. Pairing this localized marketing effort with a more large scale push to advertise to the community what an agency worker wearing a Koori flag signifies would set the stage for the realization by the community at large of what is meant when they see more staff wearing the pin and would help educate the Koori community on an effort the agencies are undertaking to engage the Koori community.

One way to help inform members of the Koori community of the services and opportunities offered is by having members of the agency attend and help run community events such as the Billabong BBQ. This event helps to strengthen relationships and allows a path for education that can then later establish the base for the third and final step of recruitment and involvement. Once members of a community are educated about a particular agency and they are familiar with it, they can make informed decisions on whether or not they would like to get involved.

4.2.3. Recruit - Getting involved with emergency services agencies

After initial engagement takes place, and agencies have educated the Koori community more about what they do as an agency, recruitment processes can begin. The Koori community participants felt that there was not a strong presence of Koori community members within MFB, CFA, or SES. There is a growing interest however to join the emergency services particularly in a full time paid position but also in the volunteer role.

Several concerns were highlighted from the Koori community about getting involved within the emergency services. It was expressed by staff at an Aboriginal community centre that entry into particular career programs seems extremely difficult to Koories who are thinking of applying, which often dissuades them from attempting to apply. For example, Koori community members expressed that they felt as if they did not have a contact within the agencies, which caused uneasiness when applying for career and volunteer employment. If the process were to be broken down and laid out step by step to prospective community members, it was said that fewer would be dissuaded from joining. According to these individuals, assistance through the application process would most likely increase the number of Koori applicants. Furthermore, some prerequisites to apply for career positions are unable to be met by members of the Koori community due to the fact that many Aboriginal Australians to not have proper birth certificates. This makes it very difficult, and sometimes impossible, to apply for career positions. Educating the Koori community and more specifically the youth of the Koori community about the application process is something that the agencies could do in order to encourage more Koori people to apply within the agencies. If agencies regularly visited school once or twice a month, and went in to talk to teens about the importance of safety, as well as becoming active within the agency, more people in the Koori community would know how to apply and the requirements to be a member of MFB, CFA, or SES.

Another way in which the application process can be made more accessible to the Koori community is creating an automatic response phone hot-line for each respective agency that helps identify certain steps of the process and can be tailored to what the applicant is having troubles with. This interactive hotline can be installed to assist anyone that is attempting to apply to one of the agencies, and may be experiencing trouble throughout the process.

Also, if agencies attended career expos in more populated Koori communities, they could make an initial contact with the Koori community. The career expos act as a way to unite both agency contacts, and Koori community contact. Bringing them together and discussing face to face the successes and issues with Koori engagement could help intensify the relationship between the Koori community and the agencies. This could also act as a way to help increase recruitment and help advocate for the agencies.

When speaking with Koori community members about joining an emergency services agency the possibility of being able to incorporate Koori traditional burning practices into a potential role they could hold in an agency increased Koori community interest. Volunteer positions in agencies could be more appealing to the Koori community if the agencies showcased how the Koori people could incorporate their culture into the job. Incorporating more cultural components of the Koori community within agencies could provoke interest within the Koori community as well as strengthen already relationships with the Koori community. Staging cultural traditions such as burning ceremonies could not only educate the staff of an agency about Koori culture, but also show Koori members and the Koori community that the agency is integrating Koori practices into the workplace. Also, symbolic representation of the Koori community at respective agencies could make the Koori community more receptive by seeing a more accommodating environment. This could be done by flying the Koori flag outside of brigades and agency building, as well as adorning the trucks and equipment used with Koori flags alongside the Australian flag. For example, one of the Metropolitan fire brigade trucks has Aboriginal art work on the side of the truck and is a reminder to the communities they serve of the conscious efforts MFB is making toward acknowledging the Koori community and creating a more culturally accepting environment at work.

5.0 General Discussion

This section contains a general discussion of the results of the project as well as recommendations for MFB, CFA, and SES based on these results. These recommendations represent possible institutional programs or changes to programs that could improve Koori engagement efforts in these agencies. Also contained in this section are suggestions for future researchers in this field that may help to streamline any future efforts.

5.1 Conjoined Efforts

Conjoining efforts across the agencies is a strategy that could potentially increase engagement with the Koori community. One larger scale, more unified effort would increase communication lines between each agency, and would also make it more convenient for Koories to access information about each agency if it is presented in a group.

One such way to bring agencies together is holding events open to one another, such as expos. The Australian Red Cross on Pelham Street in Victoria, Australia held their first ever cultural expo on 22 April, 2015. The expo was held as a means of networking between various agencies and the Koori community. Attending events like this could allow the agencies to communicate with other organizations that are employing inclusion strategies, and also directly reach out to local Koories. This expo was not only a way of networking, it was also a way of understanding cultural differences between the Koori and non-Koori community. A smoking ceremony was held, and attendees were invited to be a part of a yarning circle, an opportunity to converse openly and respectfully in a group of people. If agencies were to attend this expo potential connections could be made with the Koori community and various agencies involved with engagement and community communication.

Designating liaisons at each agency and being able to incorporate them into the Koori community is a tactic that could create a personal connection with the community. This liaison could work hands on with the Koori community, and report back to the agency's headquarters. Appointing a single liaison that becomes close with the Koori community by visiting community centers, gathering places, and events like the Billabong BBQ will show the Koori community that the agencies are interested in forming a relationship with them. After the relationship is formed, the MFB, CFA, and SES can individually begin to explain more about what they do, and even potentially invite more people from their agency to visit with them and become closer with the community.

Having a way to bring MFB, CFA, and SES together could be beneficial when striving for general engagement with the Koori community. Each agency has a different term of engagement, however, if they were to come together and have a unit or person focus on building a relationship with the Koori community it could form trust and respect between all the agencies and the Koori community. A possibility when working for emergency services such as CFA and SES is being a "double-badged" employee. This particular person could work for both organizations, and would be a way to advocate for emergency services as a whole. Identifying members that work with both the community, and are already members of agency, is another way to improve engagement within the emergency services.

The way that the agencies advocate themselves, and how they work together, is another thing that could be changed in order to promote more positive engagement. Advertisements showing agencies working with one another and agencies visiting different community centers as one are ways to demonstrate to the Koori community unity and could spark more interest within the community. The agencies could bring different vehicles and gear to community gathering places and schools in order to show the Koori community the types of things they do within their agency. This technique could also educate the people within the community about the different agencies.

Lastly, an idea to generate opportunities for Koories in the emergency services would be to set up a scholarship for them to join the emergency services. Once the scholarship is set up, each agency can go through their respective contacts in the Koori community to spread awareness about it. For example, if a Koori community member had interest in becoming a firefighter, but is only familiar with representatives from SES, the scholarship opportunity could still apply to becoming a firefighter, and in a way the agencies would be using everyone's contacts at once to distribute information. One large, conjoined effort could spread awareness about all of these agencies at once, and it would be more convenient for Koori community members to learn about many agencies at once, instead of having to acquire their information from several different places and several different representatives. Basically, if the agencies came together and made one, unified, multi-agency sponsored scholarship, and each agency distributed information about it to their respective Koori contacts, the word could get out about opportunities in all agencies to all the contacts in the Koori community. Emergency services would be represented as one entity as opposed to several smaller entities.

5.2 Internal Affairs

Individual agencies can make internal changes that could assist in the engagement of the Koori community. CFA members have explained the troubles of reporting successes and troubles of cultural awareness and Koori inclusion back to headquarters due to the fact the agency is so spread out throughout the state. Instituting a survey taken by CFA brigades on a monthly or weekly basis is a way to create more unity within CFA and could identify what areas need improvement and where there are strong points within the agency. These surveys could be collected by leaders at the individual brigades, and then sent to headquarters. At this point they can be reviewed and assessed at headquarters in order to make sure that all of the brigades are united. If there is discontent the proper changes can be made by headquarters. Another way to possibly increase unity throughout the various brigades spread out through Victoria is to appoint an Aboriginal CFA representative. This representative would be responsible for obtaining information from all brigades regarding Koori inclusions, and cultural diversity. This could allow for more fluent information between brigades as well as give the Koori people more representation in the agency.

Cultural Awareness sessions are provided by agencies like the DOJ and CFA to increase agencies members' knowledge about the Koori culture and traditions. Often times, these cultural awareness sessions are made optional by the agencies. Making cultural awareness sessions mandatory across agencies is something that could be done in order to improve the knowledge of agencies members about the Koori community. Agencies such as CFA and SES explained that they had trouble making members go due to the fact that they are mostly volunteers and it is not their primary job. If these agencies were to install a cultural awareness program as a part of training to become a volunteer, they could solve the issue of not being

able to make every employee attend these sessions. It would make attending cultural awareness sessions a requirement so those who wished to become a volunteer would have to attend before becoming a member. MFB members are full time employees; therefore the agency could institute a mandatory attendance at one cultural awareness session offered throughout the year. In order to stay up to date with Koori culture and practices, online assessments could be given to reevaluate employees. If assessments are not passed, members would have to attend the cultural awareness session again in order to refresh their cultural awareness skills. In order to show appreciation to employees who attend cultural awareness sessions badges and pins could be given out to all those who attend.

5.3 Necessary Protocols for Interaction with the Koori Community

Before interacting with the Koori community and Koori Elders it is important to consider all cultural protocols. Our team found that Koori participants were more open to conversing with us when they knew our team was aware of cultural protocols and had attended Cultural Awareness training sessions at CFA and DOJ. Personally, a group member shared an experience with an Aboriginal woman on the train to work, and used the tactics that were recommended by the cultural awareness sessions to get to know a little more about her. After talking for a few minutes, she mentioned that she was an Aboriginal Australian. We learned in the cultural awareness sessions when someone identifies as an Aboriginal Australian it is very customary in their culture to ask "what's your mob?" Asking this shows the person that you care about where they are from, and what tribe they belong to. After our group member asked this question the women was very excited, and began talking about where she was from and her heritage. She was so happy about the connection they both had that she removed her necklace, (which was made by her son and represented the Koori people with their colors), and gave it to him. For the group this was a very eye-opening experience. We had used tactics from the cultural awareness session before, but it was usually in larger group meetings that were scheduled beforehand. This was the first time that the cultural awareness session tactics were used on a regular day with a random person and it showed us how well they work. By participating in the cultural awareness sessions one is give the tools to engage members of the Koori community, and form a bond with them.

Before speaking with Koori community members it was expected that their local Elders are contacted first. This is a protocol that should be recognised by all agencies before reaching out to the Koori community. When speaking with Koori elders it was important to be upfront with our motives with the project if we wanted to receive a more positive response. We typically received a more positive response from Elders when we clearly stated that our goals in interacting with the community would be based on gaining information that could be used to help the community,

Our team attended the first ever Wominjeka Koori Expo hosted by the Red Cross on 22 April 2015. This expo brought together over 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations to meet each other and discuss Koori Inclusion. The chair of the Wominjeka Leadership group stated, "We want to do business properly; that is, bring people together to have a yarn and get to know each other to drive real, authentic and sustained change" (Red Cross, 2015). We saw familiar faces from previous interactions in the community such as Elders, Koori community centre employees, and agency employees, and through them were further introduced to members of the community. This showed us that these events are important for networking, seeing the same people and being able to reach out to them allowed for us to make more contacts and learn more about the Koori community.

Our team took part in a yarning circle after the opening ceremony, which is a group discussion amongst men or amongst women. This provided ample opportunity to meet many of the people, both Koori and non-Koori, on an in-depth level and speak about issues at hand in a respectful and thoughtful manner. The cultural rules of a yarning circle do not allow for what is said in the circle to be shared outside of it, which created a more intimate environment for our team to get to know representatives from the Koori community. This seems to be an effective way for an agency to speak freely and openly with members of the Koori community and understand their opinions and ideas. The importance of engaging the entire community in decisions for any group of Koories was stressed to us as paramount by most of the Koori community members we spoke with. Yarning circles that follow a meet-and-greet style gathering like the one hosted by Red Cross are very effective ways to speak with many members of the same community at once and allow all of their opinions to be heard. If agencies were to incorporate traditions such as the yarning circle into agencies it could engage the Koori community on a more personal manner and allow for the Koori community and the agency to connect more.

Another way incorporate traditional Koori culture into the agency work environment is by conducting smoking ceremonies. A smoking ceremony is a purification ritual where individuals are gathered around a fire of smoking gum trees leaves. Inhaling and exhaling the smoke helps with spiritual cleansing and is often incorporated alongside a welcoming for visitors to country. Smoking ceremonies are a great way for the Koori community and an agency to start an event or gathering and creates a welcoming environment. Our team was able to take part in a couple smoking ceremonies that were incorporated into larger events we attend. It is a true insight into the spiritual connection the Koori people have with the land is a great way to expose members of the agencies to the mutual respect they share with the land.

5.4 Starting the Process

Some initial engagement efforts in the emergency services agencies appear to have been effective thus far. A representative from SES was tasked with regularly appearing at Koori community centres and gathering places in the greater Melbourne area in an effort to distribute information about the agency to local communities. The representative made sure to contact the centres and be granted permission to attend before he reached out to the Koori community.

After initial interactions with Koori community members at these events and gatherings, the representative noted that people were generally unaware of the agency's responsibilities, and a few were under the impression that there was a fee for contacting the agency. The representative proceeded to offer free information about SES to individuals. He also explained that going to these gatherings in informal wear, and not uniformed as a government official, made it easier for him to approach the Koori community.

After approximately 6 months, this representative regularly appeared at events and gatherings just to hand out information about SES to any interested individual. By this point, members from the Koori community had approached this representative and asked about ways to get involved through volunteering in a unit. The representative also explained that because he was becoming so close with the Koori community, it would now be acceptable to bring in other agency members as well in an effort to help better represent SES. Eventually the end goal was to establish strong SES presence in the Koori community that is grounded by the initial relationship he developed. This approach can ultimately lead to respect and trust between SES and the Koori community.

5.5 Future Work

Overall, we have learned that building connections takes time and it is a long-term commitment. Given the timeframe of this project, we were able to establish a connection with the Koori community. Having to attend the cultural training sessions and going through multiple levels of contacts before finding individuals in the Koori community that one is able to meet with takes time. It is important to not rush the initial portion of the process because trust can be made or lost in this step. In order to develop long term engagement, long term connections need to first exist.

An initial contact in the Koori Community is a key resource toward developing contact with more members of the community. Starting off the project our team had only a few contacts within in the Koori community. It was after developing a good relationship with these individuals that they gave us contact information of key people and groups to speak with in the community. These initial contacts did not just provide contact details but also made the initial contact with the individuals they recommended to brief them on what our project was about.

Having this introduction from a fellow Koori community member that they trusted allowed our team to meet these new contacts with a pre-established level of acceptance.

Koori communities are not the only communities that are still at disconnected from the emergency services. In the greater Victoria area many cultural groups exist with little representation or communication with the emergency services. Some times more thickly settled in specific parts of the metropolitan area than Koori communities, if communication paths don't exist between these groups and local brigades/unit large sectors of the society can be isolated. Agency participants in our project often mentioned their interactions with other minority groups as well as with the Koori community. Our team found that many bridges and units that would want to incorporate members of these minority groups into their work forces if for no other reason than it would aid in their ability to perform their roles. Having a member of the community involved would allow them to gain the knowledge of how to address and contact those groups in case of emergency. Issues arose when trying to find ways to develop the initial contact to developing the relationships needed to integrate the unit/ brigade. Many of the findings relating to interacting with the Koori community and being aware of the cultural environment one is working in applies to many of these minority groups. The continued efforts to engage and incorporate the cultural awareness of these minority groups into the emergency service can branch of the work done in the field of Koori engagement.

Future efforts should be focused on first making contact with the Koori community and forming a relationship. Developing trust and respect between the emergency service agencies and the Koori community is what will fuel the engagement process. Improving communication between all culturally diverse groups and the emergency services could provide support when engaging the variety of communities. These initial steps could help future groups lay the groundwork necessary to engage culturally diverse communities, especially the Koori community.

Refer to Appendix A for more steps our team took to engage project stakeholders

6.0 Final Remarks

Koori communities have traditions that are still very much alive today that facilitate open discussions that are both respectful and insightful, as our group discovered and were a part of. Reaching out to this community and meeting them on their terms will provide an opportunity to understand what their community's needs are. A simple act of sitting in on a yarning circle with Koori community members and speaking openly will allow everyone present to voice their opinions and ideas. While an institutional plan for inclusion that comes from the headquarters of an agency is a step in the right direction, the way to better understand the point of view of every stakeholder in the inclusion process is to sit down face to face and discuss ways with which the agencies can move forward together.

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Appendix A:

Steps our team took to complete project. Potential outline for future researchers in this field:

1) Meetings with SES,MFB, CFA to gather information on: (topics of interest)
-    What practices have already been tried in the past and what resources exist
-    What systems are currently in place and to what extent is the Koori community involved
-    What are the agencies' ultimate goals for increased Koori Engagement
-    What are the entry requirements for employment and volunteerism

2) Acquire background information and research about Koori community
-    Analyse library materials on Aboriginal peoples
-    Go to Koori Cultural Centre to learn about customs and local history
-    Attend cultural walking tours through the Koorie Heritage Trust
-    DOJ and CFA cultural awareness sessions
-    Meet with local Koori community members (i.e. Jim Berg from Koorie Heritage Trust, other referred parties)

 3) Meetings with Koori community members to establish information on: (topics of interest)
-    What are their views of CFA, SES, MFB
-    Who would they call in the case of an emergency
-    Do they know what services are offered and if so do they feel comfortable utilizing the emergency services
-    Do they know what the requirements are for getting involved with CFA, SES, MFB
-    Have they ever considered volunteering for CFA or SES or do they know anyone that does?
-    Do they access any fire safety or flood safety information
-    How do they see CFA / SES / MFB "Caring for country"

4) Consider potential steps to increase engagement
-    Analyze current methods of public outreach and their effectiveness towards attracting Koori participants
-    Pursue topic of "Shared Culture of Fire"
-    Understand how Koori people view emergency services
-    Steps to change how they view (educate through field days, meetings, etc.)
-    Incentives for the Koori community members to want to participate
-    Importance of volunteers, doing it for Australia/community/land

5) Create document with recommendations → OUTCOME
        document to facilitate integrated discussion

Appendix B:

This appendix is a prompt our team used in interviews to help generate questions and ensure all topics were addressed. This was not given out to any community members or agency staff.

Koori Engagement in the Emergency Services Questions: 2015

1A. (Employed by E.S.)

1) What agency are you a part of?
2) Have you ever been a member of any other E.S. agency?
3) What is your job description?
4) Were you recruited for this job / what marketing for this job are you aware of?
5) What are the skill/ training involved with your job?
6) How much time did it take to enter your field and did you have any background experience in firefighting before doing so?
7) Why did you join your agency? What influenced your decision?
8) Have you ever worked with Koori people in the past?
    a) Have you have worked in the firefighting field on a job with a Koori person?"
    b) If so were they a full time worker or volunteer?"
9) What is your personal experience with the Koori people?
10) Do you regularly participate in activities/events with the Koori community?
11) Your view of the culture of the agency toward Koori engagement?
12) What would be the ideal outcome/ final state of relations and involvement between your organization and Koori people from your viewpoint?
    a) Do you think that Koori representation in the E.S.'s would benefit your community?
13) Are you of Aboriginal descent or do you identify as Aboriginal?
    a) Did your Aboriginal heritage have any influence on your career choice?
    b) What is your view of the way the Koori community views E.S.?
        i) Is there interest in joining the E.S. (specify age groups, regions, gender)?
        ii) What is the general knowledge about E.S. services offered?

1B. (Aboriginal Heritage)

1) What do you know about MFB, SES, CFA?
2) What services do you know are offered by MFB, CFA, SES
3) How would you want to be contacted in a case of emergency?
4) Would you ever consider a professional career or volunteer work in the emergency services? Why or why not?

5) Do you know the entrance requirements to for join each agency?

6) Who would you call in case of an emergency?

7) How would you like to receive information from the emergency services?
    a) Everyday information?
    b) Emergency information/ contact?
    c) marketing and recruitment messages

8) What do you feel in the state of relations between the general Koori community and the emergency services?

9) Do you feel disconnected from any parts of society or organisations?

10) What do you see as the idea state of relations between the Indigenous and Non Indigenous Australians?

11) Have you ever felt you have been in a situation where you felt any discrimination because of your background? If so, please elaborate if you feel comfortable?

12) Would you want to be more involved with CFA, MFB, SES as it is currently, or would certain things have to change?

13) Do you think that Koori representation in the E.S.'s would benefit your community?

14) Would you ever consider/ Have you ever considered getting involved in Emergency Services? If so which one

1C. (Lead contacts in respective E.S. agency)

1) What agency are you a part of?

2) What are the requirements to join your agency?

3) What are the incentives for joining your agency as opposed to other emergency services agencies

4) What benefits come with being a member of your agency?

5) How does your agency take part in public outreach?

6) What education methods are used to get the word out about the importance of volunteers in your agency?"

7) Are jobs/ volunteer positions marketed to specific groups of people

8) Are any of these directed at youth and more specifically Koori youth?

9) Are there any opportunities, financial or otherwise, directed towards increasing Koori participation?

10) Do you know the demographics of your agencies in terms of cultural group?
    a) What are the demographics of Kooris employed by the CFA?
    b) Any Koori community members that work full time that you know of

11) What is your view of the cultural of the agency toward Koori engagement?

12) What would be the ideal outcome/ final state of relations and involvement between your organization and Koori people from your viewpoint

Open ended questions:

2A) Koori larger group meetings

1) What is your view of the emergency services in Victoria?
2) What services do you know the emergency services offer?
   a) In relation to Koori engagement what do feel is being done by the CFA, SES, MFB?
3) What role do you currently see the Koori community playing in the emergency services?
4) What ways would you prefer to receive information for the emergency services?
   a) In an emergency (does trust play a role), how do you verify information
   b) General day to day information and updates, opportunities for involvement or service offered on a regular basis
5) What kind of communications have you had with emergency services in Victoria?
6) What would you like to see in terms of future engagement of the Koori Community with the emergency services?

2B) Agency staff larger group meetings (CFA, SES, MFB)

1) What interested you in joining your agency, and how did you first hear about your agency?
2) How do the emergency services engage with the Koori community?
3) What is your experience which Koori members in your career